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*The University of Central Asia was founded in 2000 by the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, and His Highness the Aga Khan. The International Treaty and Charter establishing this secular and private University was signed by His Highness the Aga Khan and the Presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, ratified by the respective parliaments and registered with the United Nations.*

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### **In this issue:**

## **UCA – USAID Cross-Border Vocational Education in Badakhshan, Afghanistan**

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### **UCA’s SPCE Khorog Welcomes USAID Scholarship Recipients from Afghanistan**

UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) Khorog campus has welcomed 60 Afghan students, selected to receive scholarships to pursue professional programmes at UCA’s SPCE Khorog campus as part of the joint USAID-UCA programme, “Cross-border Vocational Education in Badakhshan” (CVEB). Under the program, the students are enrolled in professional courses in English, Information Technology and Bookkeeping / Accounting, with internationally benchmarked curriculum developed and translated into Dari by SPCE.



*CVEB and SPCE students discuss a proverb during English Club*

The scholarship programme, supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is part of a two-year programme designed to promote employment and foster cross-border cooperation between Badakhshan province in Afghanistan and Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), in Tajikistan.

Launched in September 2009, CVEB has established an SPCE Project Office in Faizabad, Afghanistan, to co-ordinate scholarships for 60 Afghan students to attend certificate courses at SPCE Khorog, and to provide intensive Training of Trainers (ToT) in the construction trades to

30 Afghan learners through SPCE Khorog's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Programme. Support from USAID has also allowed SPCE Khorog to strengthen its capacity to reach Afghan students, through training of SPCE instructors and administrative staff in Dari language, and supporting the development of learning resources and curriculum designed specifically for Afghan learners.

Students of the first group, awarded scholarships to participate in professional courses in English language, have completed three months of study at SPCE Khorog. The 30 students continue to attend intensive English courses, featuring daily classroom instruction as well as supplemental activities such as Grammar and Reading Clubs. Students successfully completed their first round of examinations to move forward to the next level of the Total English program, building their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. SPCE instructors have particularly noticed this change in the confidence with which students are speaking and improving their pronunciation. "We are really improving our English day by day," said Negina, an Afghan student from Shughnan.

As part of the SPCE Khorog community, Afghan students enrolled in English language courses are enriching their studies through participation in various clubs and activities out of the classroom. SPCE's twice-weekly English Clubs allow Afghan and Tajik students meet to discuss a range of topics, including culture and tradition. Such activities are designed to allow students from both countries to practice their conversational English skills while promoting understanding between students from different communities. In addition to learning new vocabulary, practicing their speaking and improving pronunciation, students have an opportunity to share and exchange ideas. "This is an opportunity for the students to better introduce themselves to one another," explained Gulnoro Mirzovafoeva, SPCE instructor and English Club moderator. "English Club increases awareness of different cultural, economic, social and educational questions of the neighboring countries."

Over 420 students applied for the scholarships, with 186 sitting for the admissions exam in Faizabad. Nearly a quarter of the program's students are women.

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